



Rookie Bob Kraemer is surrounded by footballs . . . and that's the way the former University of Manitoba Bisons star likes it in his new role as wingback for the Blue Bombers.

MEET BOBBY KRAEMER

Stars Not In His Eyes, Just On The Field

By DON BLANCHARD

It's a long way from a Canadian college campus to a professional football arena, even for a kid who was Saturday's hero every week.

The best of them usually have stars in their eyes and rubber in their legs. That alone, puts Bobby Kraemer, who is rapidly becoming the talk of the Bombers, in a class by himself.

The only thing in Bobby's eyes is a gleam of determination. If the former University of Manitoba Bisons star quarterback and team leader holds pro football in the slightest awe, he keeps it carefully concealed.

Playing a strange position in his first big league game the other night, Kraemer caught seven passes for 71 yards and wondered what all the fuss was about.

Kraemer may be a long way from stardom in the Canadian Football League. For one thing his size is against him. But don't bet against him.

At any rate, it seems appropriate to conduct an in depth look at this composed youngster, who Blue Bomber fans quite easily could come to love.

For one thing, he's just as poised and cool during an interview as he is on the football field.

What happened to the stars? Doesn't he feel the pressure? We'll let him answer that.

"I'd been warned about coming up with stars in my eyes. Coach Janzen told me not to get starry-eyed . . . that the other guys pull their pants on one leg at a time," Kraemer said softly while he waited his turn in the whirlpool after Friday night's workout.

But what about the pressure, Bobby, knowing so many fans are expecting so much from you? You know, the local boy makes good angle?

"I'm not sure that adds to the pressure. Actually, it's very en-

couraging to know those people are behind you." He paused before adding: "Gosh, I'd hate to have them against me."

"I feel the real pressure was to make this team. At one point my spirits were pretty low. The coaches had me playing defence and I couldn't see any way I could make the team there. But coach Stanley helped me a lot. He kept telling me not to get faint hearted, not to give up, and the encouragement helped."

"Then when Paul (Williams) hurt his back, I was fortunate enough to get the chance at wingback, even though I'd only practised there for a week."

Bison coach Henry Janzen's favorite football player didn't have any illusions about playing quarterback when he came to camp.

"I realized from the beginning I couldn't start at quarterback," said the little guy whose heart is almost as big as his body.

"I just wanted to play offence and develop my quarterbacking at the same time. Eventually, I feel I'll get a shot at quarterback. But right now my main concern is to do the best job I can and help the team."

A highly intelligent youngster, Kraemer remains a little man playing a big man's game. But he has a lot of plus factors on his side of the ledger.

Listen to head coach Jim Spavital describe the 175-pounder whom many people feel was robbed of the country's outstanding college player award last year.

"Bobby's simply one of those fine, all-around athletes. He isn't blessed with great speed, but he has good hands and is a quick learner. I believe he will become a fine pro football player."

Naturally, Kraemer has some definite impressions about pro football already. His first impression?

I guess the first thing you notice is that everybody is bigger and everybody is faster than in college football. Even the linemen are fast.

"I'm probably the smallest one on the team, anyway," Kraemer smiled impishly. "In college I was an average sized backfielder, in fact there were a lot of guys smaller than me. I was one of the fastest on the team in college, but not any more."

Kraemer said one of the biggest problems he was having was making the transition from quarterback to wingback. "There are all the different assignments to learn . . . I've never played that close to the line and had to block before," he chuckled.

Kraemer, who has dipped from 180 pounds to 170 since camp opened, conceded that the fact he was a quarterback made it easier for him to run his patterns and recognize certain defences, but added: "I think all receivers are taught to read defences."

Asked if he had any goals, perhaps personal achievements, Kraemer mulled the question over and chose his words carefully. "Number one, my goal was to make the team, number two, to make it as a starter, number three, to help the team be a winner."

Bobby hopes his pro career parallels his college career. Thus far it has. When he graduated from Sisler High after being a good quarterback in the city league, Kraemer played three exhibition games with the Bisons as a flanker.

Then Bisons quarterback Kirk Koppers was injured, Kraemer moved in and it was the start of a dynasty.

His parting shot yesterday was: "The first year I was with the Bisons the team went from last place to first. Let's hope history repeats itself."

Amen!